



## CASE STUDY

# HIV/AIDS and Export Competitiveness

**The clustering of businesses by the Southern Africa Trade Hub for the creation of HIV/AIDS workplace interventions directly benefits international trade competitiveness**



Photo: Bronwyn Palmer

**To date the Trade Hub has assisted in the formation of three clusters of agricultural exporters, two in South Africa and one in Zambia. The total number of employees reached with these HIV/AIDS workplace services is over 18,000 with an additional 75,000 secondary beneficiaries.**

U.S. Agency for International Development  
[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

**CHALLENGE** Small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) are frequently unable to initiate workplace HIV/AIDS intervention programs due to significant start up costs associated with establishing a comprehensive program. However, these same organizations understand the impact HIV/AIDS is having on their bottom line - profit. SMEs face the same challenges from HIV/AIDS as larger entities: high prevalence and morbidity rates, which frequently result in staff turn over, lower productivity, and higher labor costs. In extreme cases, these costs result in business collapse and closure.

**INITIATIVE** In an attempt to assist SMEs meet the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS, the Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub has developed workplace programs by establishing "clusters" of firms within defined geographic areas and sectors. These clusters are able to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their HIV/AIDS education and prevention, care and treatment programs. The cluster approach allows for economies of scale and cost sharing among cluster members. It also enables members to pool both financial and technical resources necessary, for effective implementation of comprehensive HIV/AIDS workplace programs. Using this innovative approach, the Trade Hub's HIV/AIDS Advisor has worked with agribusiness clusters in South Africa and Zambia to design workplace programs. These programs have been developed with the understanding that AIDS awareness, prevention, linkages to care and treatment programs in the workplace are fundamental for long-term business competitiveness.

**RESULTS** The cluster approach to workplace programs for HIV/AIDS awareness, education, care, and support activities by the Southern Africa Trade Hub has directly impacted the lives of 18,200 workers to date. Additionally 75,000 secondary beneficiaries lives are directly affected by the programs. Equally important has been the ability to leverage funding to support the programs. Examples include funds through PEPFAR assisted programs, local and national governments, and from private sector organizations to cover the costs of intervention activities.